

# BOULDER-LHASA SISTER CITY PROJECT

www.boulder-tibet.org

776 Cottage Lane, Boulder, Colorado 80304-0758 U.S.A.  
303-443-9863 info@boulder-tibet.org

## ANNUAL REPORT FOR CY2015 24 February 2016

Boulder-Lhasa Sister City Project is an all-volunteer, non-political, 501(c)(3), charitable organization. Membership is open to all regardless of race, religion, nationality, and political beliefs.

### **City of Boulder Resolution 631 Compliance**

Boulder-Lhasa Sister City Project maintains compliance with all provisions of Resolution 631:

- 501(c)(3) Status
- Membership Requirements
- Boulder-based Board of Directors
- Financial Reporting
- Work Plan reporting

### **Board of Directors**

The BLSCP Board of Directors is Boulder-based, with the board elected by the membership, and with no member of the board being a part of any commercial venture in Lhasa. The current Board of Directors is:

Bill Warnock	President
Carol Delker	Vice President
Carrie Hartman	Secretary
Stanley Goldberg	Treasurer

### **2015 Highlights**

#### **VISITING LHUNGTSÉ, APRIL 30-MAY 5**

Lhungtse is a teen-age Tibetan girl who lives in Kham on the Tibetan Plateau (Yajiang County in western Sichuan Province of China) with her mother and brother. Because her father passed away in 2004, her mother has been working for eleven years as a farmer to support her family of three. Around 2007, Lhungtse began losing her vision in both eyes and also started suffering from headaches and seizures. In



Lhungtse in 2010 in her home village with Dr. Li Tiaoying (right) and a village leader (left)

2010, Dr. Li Tiaoying, Sichuan Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (SCDC), Chengdu, Sichuan, diagnosed Lhungtse to have a serious case of neurocysticercosis (NCC).

This disease results from fecal-oral contamination from human carriers of another very serious preventable parasitic disease called taeniasis. The risk factors for taeniasis include eating undercooked pork, the use of free-ranging pigs, lack of latrine facilities, lack of meat inspection, poor hygiene, and a poor economy. NCC caused many cysts deep in Lhungtse's brain. The cysts caused hydrocephalus, for which there is an abnormal accumulation of cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) in the ventricles of the brain. The hydrocephalus caused increased intracranial pressure inside

Lhungtse's skull. This increased intracranial pressure caused Lhungtse's headaches and damaged her optic nerves. This damage caused Lhungtse's total blindness.

**2013 - Lhungtse's Brain Surgery** Thanks to generous donations from many of you and others, Lhungtse received ventriculoperitoneal (VP) shunt brain surgery on 5 September 2013 at Sichuan Provincial People's Hospital in Chengdu. BLSCP raised \$13,000 before her surgery and \$6,091.71 afterwards to pay for all of the hospital costs and related expenses.

**April 28 - Chengdu** BLSCP members Bill Warnock and Shari Mayer arrived in Chengdu on April 26 to meet with Lhungtse's doctors and then travel to Kangding to spend six days with Lhungtse and her family. Bill and Shari used personal funds to pay for all travel costs. On April 28, we met with Dr. Li and Dr. Zeng Xian Rong, the neurologist who had examined Lhungtse on February 9. An electroencephalogram (EEG) showed some abnormalities in the electrical activity in Lhungtse's brain, which were apparently caused by calcified lesions at the sites of dead parasitic cysts. Dr. Zeng prescribed oxcarbazepine, one 300 mg tablet, twice each day, to help control the partial seizures that Lhungtse has experienced since her surgery in 2013. Dr. Zeng asked us to let her know how Lhungtse was responding to this medication. She also asked us to arrange tests for Lhungtse's white blood cell count, blood platelets, and liver function, which are indications of tolerance for taking oxcarbazepine.



**Meeting Lhungtse's doctors on April 28 in Chengdu: Dr. Li Tiaoying, Shari Mayer, Bill Warnock, Dr. Zeng Xian Rong (left to right)**



**Bill, Lhungtse, Shari, Lhungtse's mother, Lhungtse's brother**

learned that Lhungtse had been forgetful sometimes, experienced some chest pains, and worried very much about the future of her and her family. We left the school with Lhungtse and spent the night at a hotel in Kangding.

**May 1-3 - Tagong** Before departing Kangding for the three-day International Labor Day weekend, we took Lhungtse to the Ganzi Prefecture Hospital for some blood tests and arranged for

**April 30 - Kangding** Our excellent Kham Tour was provided by Conscious Journeys. Our excellent tour guide, driver, and interpreter/translator was Tenpa Tenzin. Lhungtse's mother and brother arrived from Yajiang and went with us to Ganzi Prefecture Special School to meet with Lhungtse and one of her top teachers. We learned that Lhungtse was still experiencing a short-term paralysis of the jaw and hands from time to time. This paralysis was lasting for 2-3 minutes, did not include any shaking or loss of hearing, was accompanied by some kind of image moving behind her eyes, and sometimes caused Lhungtse to fall down. These episodes were reportedly occurring several times each week and sometimes twice in one day. However, Lhungtse apparently had not suffered any injuries when falling down. We could not confirm whether Lhungtse was fully complying with the prescribed oxcarbazepine dosage every day. We also



**Lhungtse in Tagong**



an electrocardiogram (EKG) and another blood test to be taken on the morning of May 4. We then drove northwest of Kangding around 70 miles to the village of Tagong. We stayed at Khampa Cafe and Guesthouse, which was opened in May 2010 by Angela Lankford, who is from Westcliffe, Colorado. Angela has recently sold this business to a Czech man named Max. She is now building an eco-lodge around 6 miles outside of town. We visited Angela there and also toured Lhagang Monastery.

**May 4-5 - Kangding** After finishing the tests at Ganzi Prefecture Hospital and eating breakfast on May 4, we returned Lhungtse to Ganzi Prefecture Special School. We met with one of the top administrators, who thanked us for our efforts to help Lhungtse. He said that the school has the same goal of helping disabled students to become independent. He said that the school now has a total of 93 blind and deaf students and hopes to expand the enrollment by several hundred in the future and also include other disabilities. He explained that the school normally requires its students to be physically fit and that Lhungtse requires extra support from the staff and other students. He was fearful that people could blame the school if Lhungtse died or became injured while enrolled at the school. He and some teachers were surprised that Lhungtse had experienced no seizures during the four days with us.



**Lhungtse (standing on left) and her close friend Droma (standing on right) practicing massage therapy**

Lhungtse's mother returned to her home in Yajiang to hunt for caterpillar fungus, which is a significant source of income for many Tibetans. Shari and I remained at the school during the afternoon to attend Lhungtse's massage therapy training class. The school has hired a blind massage teacher, who is providing potential vocational training to around 15 students.

On May 5, Shari and I returned to the school with Tenpa, our driver, guide, and interpreter/translator, and visited the afternoon massage therapy class again. After class ended, Tenpa provided some excellent advice and encouragement to Lhungtse. I told Lhungtse's close friend Droma that we are very happy that they are friends. Then they went off together to the cafeteria for dinner, and we left the school.

**May 7 - Chengdu** Dr. Zeng, the neurologist, agreed to an early morning meeting with us in her office at Sichuan Provincial People's Hospital. Although Dr. Zeng has some fluency in English, Tenpa agreed to join this meeting so that he could also discuss Lhungtse's situation in Mandarin Chinese. Dr. Zeng examined the hospital reports for Lhungtse's blood tests and EKG and concluded that they were all normal. She concurred with our suggestions that stress may be the cause of Lhungtse's chest pains and also may be a trigger for some of Lhungtse's partial seizures. Dr. Zeng prescribed that Lhungtse should increase her dosage of oxcarbazepine to one 300 mg tablet, three times each day, for one month, after which Dr. Zeng requested a report on Lhungtse's response to the increased dosage. She said that Lhungtse would need to take this medicine for some time, so we purchased a 100-day supply of 300 tablets at the hospital pharmacy. Dr. Zeng also wrote and signed a note for the school administrators, which indicated that Lhungtse is under her medical care.

Since Tenpa was scheduled to drive back to Kangding on the following day, he offered to take the medicine and note to the school. Shari and I traveled from Chengdu back to our homes on the following day. I understand from Tenpa that Lhungtse started the increased dosage of medicine



**Enjoying dinner together at the Elephant Restaurant in the Tibetan quarter of Chengdu: Bill; Shari; Tenpa; Kush (Kunchok Sherab), Trip Coordinator for our Conscious Journeys Kham Tour**

around May 13. We are hopeful that the medicine will lessen her partial seizures.

**Lhungtse's Continuing Medical Expenses** BLSCP received some donations in December 2014 for Lhungtse and a 2015 BLSCP Health Mission. These funds have been used to pay \$463.06 for the costs of medical examinations in February, blood and EKG tests in early May, and the new supply of medicine.

### **VISITING LHUNGtSE, NOVEMBER 12-17**

**November 9 & 10 - Chengdu** BLSCP members Bill Warnock and Shari Mayer arrived in Chengdu on November 9 to meet with Lhungtse's doctors and then travel to Kangding to spend six days with Lhungtse and her mother. Bill and Shari used personal funds to pay for all travel costs. On November 9, Bill met for dinner with Dr. Li and Dr. Zeng Xian Rong, who is Lhungtse's neurologist. Dr. Zeng prescribed for Lhungtse to continue taking an anti-convulsant called oxcarbazepine, one 300-mg tablet, three times each day. She also asked us to arrange blood tests again for Lhungtse to check her tolerance for taking oxcarbazepine. On November 10, Bill purchased an additional 300 tablets of oxcarbazepine with BLSCP funds. Dr. Zeng requested for Lhungtse to come to Chengdu on the afternoon of either 22 or 29 February 2016 for check-ups by Dr. Liao, who is her neurosurgeon, and by Dr. Zeng.



**Lhungtse's mother & Bill**

**November 12-17 - Kangding** Our excellent Kham Tour was again provided by Conscious Journeys. Our excellent tour guide, driver, and interpreter/translator was again Tenpa Tenzin. Before seeing Lhungtse at Ganzi Prefecture Special School, we chatted with her mother about our hope to identify potential vocational opportunities for Lhungtse. Her mother replied, "That will be good, but more important is the fact that Lhungtse is alive. Without her brain surgery in 2013, by now she would probably be dead."



**Shari & Lhungtse's mother**

On November 12 & 13, we visited Lhungtse at her school. She is happier and more confident compared to our previous visit in April-May 2015. In her dormitory room she was very pleased to show us how she can make her bed and also demonstrate for us several repetitions of one of her physical exercises. She explained that her cue for taking her medicine is when she finishes washing her eating bowl after each of her three daily meals. When we were leaving the school for the weekend, she insisted on having no assistance for negotiating the two long flights of stairs from the school courtyard down to our vehicle.

As we were driving to a restaurant for lunch, Lhungtse told us, "I am so happy to be with you!" Then Tenpa asked her, with a smile, "What do you mean?" She replied, "Life right now is smooth."

On November 14 & 15, we spent time with several local friends.

On the morning of November 16, we took Lhungtse to Ganzi Prefecture Hospital to give some blood for testing. Then we returned Lhungtse to Ganzi Prefecture Special School and met with the Headmaster. He said that in 2016 the school is planning to open a massage shop in downtown Kangding, where students from the school's massage training class will be able to earn money for providing massages.



In the afternoon, Lhungtse's mother returned to her home in Yajiang, and Tenpa went to the hospital to obtain the results for Lhungtse's blood tests, which were all normal.

On November 17, I sent Lhungtse's blood tests results to Dr. Zeng in Chengdu, and we returned to Ganzi Prefecture Special School. We met with the head teacher, who gave us several updates about Lhungtse:

1. Since Lhungtse returned to school around October 6, she had actually had several seizures. However, most of them were minor and lasted only around one minute.
2. The school is doing the best that it can to monitor Lhungtse, but it is impossible to know for sure if she takes three tablets of her medicine every day.
3. Lhungtse does OK with daily life functions and playing with other students. However, she is still not accomplishing much in her classes and studying.
4. She does have a reasonably good usage of Chinese Mandarin and Sichuan dialects.
5. She appears not to like the massage training class much.



**Lhungtse at lunch**



**Enjoying a Tibetan dinner in Kangding with several local friends**

**Lhungtse's Future** Except for her total blindness caused by the parasitic disease, Lhungtse is reasonably healthy. She has made considerable progress following her brain surgery in 2013. So far the ventriculoperitoneal (VP) shunt in Lhungtse's brain has been working well. We hope and pray that her shunt system will not have any complications, such as mechanical failure, obstructions, or infections.

We hope that Dr. Zeng will be able to test her cognitive ability during her examination in February 2016. In addition to the massage training now at Ganzi Prefecture Special School, we are developing several other potential vocations for Lhungtse.

#### **Fund-raising / Contributions (CY2015)**

Solar Electricity Program	0.00
Parasite Medical Program	1,970.00
Namling County Schools Project	0.00
Lhasa Kungshon Language School	0.00
General Use	895.00
Membership Dues	160.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 3,025.00</b>

#### **2016 Work Plan** **HEALTH MISSION**

We are considering a health mission in rural Lhasa Prefecture. This activity is under development and not yet defined.

## **COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

BLSCP will continue to be a resource for the Boulder community, by providing outreach activities on our programs in Tibet and information regarding the geography, climate, high-altitude effects, travel accommodations, and culture of Tibet. BLSCP will maintain and update its own Web site at **[www.boulder-tibet.org](http://www.boulder-tibet.org)**. BLSCP will continue to participate in Boulder Sister City Alliance, which is an effective, informal organization of Boulder's seven sister city organizations.

### **2016 Budget (estimated)**

#### **RECEIPTS**

Solar Electricity Program	0.00
Parasite Medical Program	1,000.00
Namling County Schools Project	0.00
Lhasa Kungshon Language School	0.00
General Use	500.00
Membership Dues	<u>200.00</u>
TOTAL	\$ 1,700.00

#### **DISBURSEMENTS**

Solar Electricity Program	0.00
Parasite Medical Program	1,000.00
Namling County Schools Project	0.00
Lhasa Kungshon Language School	0.00
Operating Expenses	500.00
Community Outreach	<u>200.00</u>
TOTAL	\$ 1,700.00